BOOK REVIEWS

Introducing Information Management: An *Information Research* Reader. Edited by: Elena Maceviciute and T. D. Wilson. London, UK: Facet Publishing, 2005. 235 p. $99.95. ISBN: 978-1-85604-561-7.⊗

Information Research, a journal listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, began publishing in 1995. Based on an analysis of hits on the journal Website, the *Information Research Reader* assembled 15 of the most popular papers published in *Information Research* from 1995 to 2005, out of more than 100 papers. For this volume, editors Maceviute and Wilson requested that authors revise their pieces to reflect more current research. Articles were grouped into 5 categories: general papers, information behavior, environmental scanning and decision making, knowledge management, and information strategy.

Because "information management" is a diffuse notion, this reviewer looked for a definition to illuminate the concept. Although some papers are outstanding, the work is disappointing on the whole. After reading the entire book, readers do not have a satisfactory definition of this field.

The formulation offered by the editors is too vague: "Information management (IM) is a field of wide scope which is also related to other fields, such as information systems, computer science, artificial intelligence research, information science, documentation and more. . . . [O]ne should mention diverse levels of IM: research is done on personal, organizational, and statewide IM" (p. xi). To be fair, the editors acknowledge the inherent amorphousness of the field at the beginning and admit that informing a reader about such a field, therefore, is rather difficult.

The best papers are the most general; even if IM remains hard to grasp, these pieces help ease the task. "Environmental Scanning as Information Seeking and Organizational Learning" provides a thorough overview of the concept of environmental scanning, taking account of the effect of external factors on the operations of an organization. The author details different techniques of environmental scanning and delineates the conditions that encourage aggressive or too passive scanning. Because the information seeking universe is rapidly evolving, all librarians could benefit from a good understanding of environmental scanning.

The most amusing chapters concern knowledge management. The author of "'The Nonsense of Knowledge Management' Revisited" reconsiders his view that knowledge management is a meaningless buzzword but concludes that he was right to begin with. The counterpoint, "Knowledge Management and Information Management: Review of Empirical Evidence," argues that knowledge management is a valid subset of information management. This reviewer sides with the nonsense camp, because no meaning of information management emerged.

A particularly relevant chapter for *Journal of the Medical Library Association* readers is "Healthcare Information Management and Technology Strategy: The Story So Far." Writing about the United Kingdom, the author details the inherent tension between national informatics directives and local realities. This is not just a challenge for the United Kingdom; the United States continues to grapple with the challenge of creating portable electronic health records (EHRs) that maintain privacy. Librarians have been an integral part of this discussion, particularly about how to integrate evidence-based content into EHRs.

Because of the quirks of Website hit counts, several papers have narrow appeal. One paper discusses the information culture in the Finnish insurance industry; another focuses on information needs at Estonian publishing companies. Two papers are about Singapore: one about the information-seeking behavior in its managerial class and another about the city-state's strategies for expanding on information technology development by the year 2000.

The profusion of these types of papers is puzzling. Obviously, it is important to learn about the experiences of people in other countries, especially places that relatively few North Americans have visited. But, in the context of the *Information Research Reader,* selection of more broadly representative papers would have been useful. Theoretically, the top fifteen most popular papers all might have been about one country. Would they all have been published?

The randomness of some of the selections leads to not recommending this book for most libraries, despite the excellence of many of its papers. It would be useful as a reference source in libraries that support programs in information management. However, even those libraries—and all others—could simply refer patrons to the freely available online version of *Information Research.* Once on the Website, readers could chart their own course to the interesting articles in this unique journal.

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Libraries Beyond Their Institutions: Partnerships That Work. Edited by William Miller and Rita M. Pellen. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press, 2005. 230 p. Softcover, $39.95. ISBN: 978-0-7890-2909-6. Hardcover, $59.95. ISBN: 978-0-7890-2908-9. Copublished as **Resource Sharing & Information Networks,** v.18, nos. 1/2, 2005/2006.⊗

When thinking about partnerships, libraries often think of partnering with groups in their organizations. In *Libraries Beyond Their Institutions: Partnerships That Work,* Miller and Pellen provide the reader with many examples of library collaborations outside the libraries' organizations. Although the majority of the chapters are authored by librarians in academic settings, the shared ideas can be used as a basis for thinking about partnerships, whether in a hospital or academic library.

The book gathers the experiences of various library collaborations. The types of partnerships described differ by chapter. The first chapter outlines a partnership between a library and K–12 educators to promote information literacy. Another chapter illustrates successful collaborations wherein the library is a technology partner on the library's campus, as well as regionally and nationally. Providing digital information to ethnic non-profits is another example of a library partnership. International resource sharing—such as document delivery, indexing, and catalog creation—between a health sciences library and overseas partners is described. Other chapters outline the benefits of library consortia and civic partnerships.

An interesting chapter examines collaborations from the staff perspective. The authors cite improved morale and increased continuing education opportunities for the staff. The last chapter in the book describes a partnership between a library and a commercial vendor to test a new product.

"An A to Z Overview," near the end of the book, provides insight into what might be involved in establishing collaborations. The author of this chapter does an excellent job of outlining what a library needs to consider when entering into a partnership, such as how to identify, approach, and maintain a partner. The author gives examples of what resources are needed, what works, and what might not, as well as a long list of partnership examples. This chapter might have been better placed at the beginning of the book instead of inserted at the end.

Overall, this book describes many different partnerships. Anyone interested in looking outside their library setting for collaborations will find it useful.

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The Reference Collection: From the Shelf to the Web. Edited by William J. Frost. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press, 2005. 310 p. $34.95. Softcover. ISBN: 978-0-7890-2840-2. Copublished as **The Reference Librarian,** nos. 91/92, 2005.⊗

In his introduction, the editor gives five reasons (he numbers four then adds a further one) why the Internet is "the preferred medium" for reference sources: access in- and outside the library, less work for library staff, updated more often, near universal use of the Internet, and links to full text. He points out that it has taken less than ten years for the Internet to become such a universal tool.

The opening chapter on the history of reference works is a gem. The writing is engaging, the facts intriguing, and one should not miss the witty annotations in the references. Among many sources this reviewer would now like to read is Bill Katz's *Reference Books from Cuneiform to Computer,* which is cited in this chapter (and an "In Memoriam" to Katz is at the front of the book). The paragraph on the history of MEDLARS, and the description of how early searches were done, will particularly interest medical librarians. In 1973, MEDLARS training took three weeks; this reviewer spent one week in 1979; today, PubMed is taught in one day. Much of the later history of computerization in reference is related directly to Utah and the chapter author's own library, but it will still ring true to most other librarians.

Two Australian librarians describe how English-speaking countries deal with access to Web-based reference sources. Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and South Africa have different funding and administrative systems. The next two chapters discuss the challenges in public and school libraries, respectively. Library staff have unique challenges in both contexts.

The president of Merriam-Webster then discusses the issues facing publishers. Merriam-Webster was one of the first to put major reference works online free of charge when the *Collegiate Dictionary* and *Collegiate Thesaurus* were made available in 1996. The author quotes Richard Saul Wurman and calls this the "Age of Also." He suggests that a "hybrid world" of print and electronic publishing will continue for perhaps the next ten to fifteen years. An interesting advantage of the Web-based dictionary is that the publisher can count hits to see which words are being looked up the most and how and why people use dictionaries.

How library assignments given to students affect the use of Web-based reference sources is the next topic. Faculty, students, and librarians all have different views of how the Internet can or should be used, and one of the "challenges" for students is distinguishing between search engines and databases. The following chapter on "cyberplagiarism" continues the discussion of how librarians interact with students and suggests and describes several websites on plagiarism.

Ready reference Websites are the next topic. The author surveys American libraries and asks twenty questions to evaluate features such as content, organization, and provision of tutorials, indexes, or help screens. An appendix shows the results of the survey. Four "federated" search tools are the topic of the next chapter: MetaLib by Ex Libris, ENCompass by Endeavor, AGent by Auto-Graphics, and WebFeat by WebFeat and Thomson ISI. These common interfaces to multiple sources are evaluated for features such as search functions, user customization, and administration and maintenance. The authors conclude that they are useful tools but have some caveats about precision and suitability in different library contexts. A concluding table compares their features.

Subsequent chapters discuss Websites in the subject areas of the humanities, science, medicine, social sciences, business, and education. Medical librarians will already know most of the health-related sites described by the director of the library and archives at the

American Psychiatric Association (and the list of mental health sites is thorough). However, all subject specialist librarians will find the areas outside their own expertise useful. Some of the chapters are lengthy annotated lists, while others provide more description and discussion.

The list of 100 ''top'' Websites in the final chapter is, of course, a subjective selection. They are a wide-ranging mix, some very common, from Amazon.com, to the IRS, to How Stuff Works, Internet Broadway, Fact Monster (for children), and even How to Vote Smart—a treasure trove for the trivia buff.

The major problem with this book, of course, is timeliness. While the opening chapter on the history of reference works stands alone as a timeless, interesting essay, most of the chapters will eventually, perhaps sooner rather than later, be out of date. This reviewer had a volunteer check all the 100 top sites (to the enjoyment of the volunteer) and spot-checked many others. A few had problems like Flash Player requirement or forbidden access. Lists of Websites can be found in many sources (including Websites), but this work is engaging and interesting. It would serve well in any library and probably for bibliophile consumers as well.

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COHN, JOHN M., AND KELSEY, ANN L. **Staffing the Modern Library: A How-To-Do-It-Manual.** New York, NY, and London, UK: Neal-Schuman Publishers. (How-To-Do-It Manuals for Librarians, number 137.) 105 pp. $75.00. ISBN: 978-1-55570-511-1.⊗

Libraries are evolving rapidly from physical spaces providing on-site services and resources to providers of electronic resources and virtual services. The book, *Staffing the Mod-*

ern Library: A How-To-Do-It Manual, written by Cohn and Kelsey, is designed to help library administrators staff this modern organization. This is accomplished by defining competencies, outlining appropriate job descriptions, developing training programs, and exploring partnerships and outsourcing as part of the staffing solution. The book itself is brief and consists of an introduction to the increasingly complex library environment, 8 chapters on such topics as ''Facilitating the Move to Competency-based Staffing,'' and a conclusion discussing how to define staff in a virtual library. The layout is designed for easy reading and reference with many bulleted lists, clear definitions, and sample worksheets. Each chapter closes with an annotated bibliography. These bibliographies prove very informative, wide-ranging, and useful in terms of exploring topics discussed in more detail.

Much of the foundation of this book is derived from recent business literature with its emphasis on ''lean'' organizations and their flexible and adaptable staffing models. Strategic partnerships are discussed as a means of extending staffing while libraries make the transition to new roles and services. This approach facilitates reexamining the traditional library organizational model, usually drawn along functional lines, in light of alternative models that focus on skills, knowledge, and behaviors instead of tasks and functions. Several salient examples illustrate this new approach. The evolving role of the reference librarian in the electronic era is used quite effectively to highlight the creation of competency-based job descriptions.

This example is followed by a discussion of creating effective and sustainable staff training and development programs to foster continuous learning and to maximize current staff contributions in the rapidly changing library environment. However, Cohn and Kelsey argue that current staff may not always be sufficient to handle new roles and responsibilities. Library managers might need to turn to

outsourcing, insourcing (i.e., outside consultants working directly with library staff), and/or co-sourcing (i.e., combining a mix of internal and external expertise and resources) to accomplish strategic goals. Two examples are used to highlight the need for these kinds of partnerships: the evolution of the library's Web page to a personalized information tool and the development of an internal digitization project. Both projects might be done entirely with internal staff or they could require outside expertise, contract staffing, and possibly off-site technological resources. The steps needed to plan the best staffing model for these projects are reviewed in the book's second half.

Overall, *Staffing the Modern Library* provides a good introduction to and overview of the challenges faced by library managers as their organizations adapt to the electronic era. Some thought-provoking topics are raised, especially with regard to implementing business models in the nonprofit setting, but the work as a whole lacks depth. This reviewer would like additional information on redeploying current staff, more examples of new roles for librarians, and a discussion of change management. Libraries may be expected to assume new responsibilities for electronic resources and the delivery of information, but ''old'' tasks such as telephone and in-person reference, print reserves, and binding have not yet faded into oblivion. How can staff be deployed to handle both new and old responsibilities? How can they be encouraged to see change as positive and not as a threat to job stability? How do libraries accomplish more and move forward within the constraints of current budget and staffing levels?

For those in health sciences libraries, this book's emphasis on partnerships may also prove a liability. Nearly all of the partnerships discussed in this book refer to consultative relationships, outsourcing with commercial entities, or consortial relationships with other libraries. In health care, the strategic partnerships most libraries build are with other departments in the

parent institution, such as information technology, Web services, and medical education. Knowing how to build strong relationships with the appropriate departments, strongly supporting projects crucial to the institution's mission, and partnering with patron groups such as medical and nursing staff are essential to the successful operation of a health sciences library. These types of intra-institutional partnerships are not discussed in *Staffing the Modern Library*.

This book proves an enjoyable read that highlights many issues libraries face as staff struggle to rewrite job descriptions, plan for the future, and enhance staff skills and knowledge. The annotated bibliographies offer an important glimpse at some of the professional literature normally outside the range of many librarians. However, this book does not provide in-depth solutions to staffing problems faced by health sciences libraries. *Staffing the Modern Library* provides general planning grids for job descriptions, training plans, and decisions about outsourcing, but one would need to rely heavily on other tools for in-depth information on the repository process and the health care environment. For health sciences librarians, this book serves as an introduction to staffing issues and not as a detailed planning manual.

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The Virtual Reference Desk. Edited by R. David Lankes, Marilyn Domas White, Eileen G. Abels, and Saira N. Haque. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2006. 226 p. $75.00. Softcover. ISBN: 1-55570-555-3.⊗

The ten chapters of this multi-authored work are grouped into four parts: ''Chat Reference,'' ''Training and Staffing,'' ''Evalua-tion,'' and ''Innovative Approaches.'' Brief biographical sketches are given for the seventeen authors and four editors. Contributors come from the United States, Canada, and Denmark and different types of libraries and library schools, though none is from a medical library. The book consists of the ''best'' papers from a conference on virtual reference.

''Chat Reference'' deals with teenagers and impatient and rude encounters, providing verbatim transcripts and offering sound advice. Some teen questions are amusing and amazing, and some of the rude encounters would test any librarian's patience. These two chapters are instructive for anyone dealing with the public in a virtual environment. The advice on avoiding unpleasant or difficult interactions applies to almost any reference context.

The chapters on ''Training and Staffing'' describe a workshop at the University of Maryland and a survey of staffing issues at Canadian universities. The advice, once more, is presented with practical suggestions. Sufficient detail is given about the workshop and feedback from it that one could use the chapter in setting up a similar course. Most of the sixteen Canadian libraries did not hire additional staff to provide virtual reference, and the chapter discusses the ''sacrifice'' entailed.

''Evaluation'' has a chapter on setting performance targets and another on creating a knowledgebase of digital reference transactions. In one chapter, the Vancouver Public Library pondered measuring success and set performance targets. The project in the second chapter involved a complex survey and analysis for developing a ''schema'' that would pull together material from disparate sources into a ''Digital Reference Electronic Warehouse.''

A Danish consortium of public and academic libraries supported by the Danish National Library Authority is profiled in the first chapter of ''Innovative Approaches.'' A ''veteran'' (about-to-retire) librarian at the Goddard Space Flight Center provides experienced advice on the building of a knowledgebase. Librarians from Florida's Orange County Library System describe how they installed wi-fi technology. Photographs and diagrams illustrate how the system works and depict happy library users. Finally, Rutgers University librarians describe a ''virtual collaboratory'' with industry to develop a course on ''Food and Nutrition Business Informatics and Communication'' by combining existing technology and resources.

A final chapter summarizes the book and suggests that the ''agenda'' does not provide a complete picture of digital reference. This chapter does not seem particularly useful, especially because technology has already moved on since the conference was held and the book then written.

Overall, the strengths of this book are its practicality and the wide variety of contexts and issues discussed. The libraries are diverse: public, academic, large, small, North American, European, supported by government, supported by industry. Details of software and other technology are given. Numerous tables of statistics explain the scope of each project. Plentiful references after every chapter lead to further resources. Even though health sciences environments are not represented, consumer health librarians and anyone who deals with less-than-gracious patrons would find the human aspects interesting. The staffing and evaluation issues are universal, as are the technologies. There are other books on virtual reference, including at least one specifically addressing medical libraries, but anyone considering setting up such a service should probably collect as much as possible on the subject.

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